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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000372

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#) [QA](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AA/S FELTMAN'S MEETINGS WITH CROWN PRINCE AND
FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: ABU DHABI 611

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Acting Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman met on June 15 with Bahrain's Crown Prince and Foreign Minister. They discussed Syria, Qatar, and the Iranian and Lebanese elections. End summary.

Detach Syria from Iran

¶2. (C) After reviewing the healthy relationship between the U.S. and Bahrain on military cooperation, trade, and regional diplomacy, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa expressed his appreciation for the President's commitment to pursuing peace in the region, and said that Syria and Qatar were important to any solution. The key to detaching Syria from Iran, he said, would be money and security guarantees. Shaikh Salman said Bashar had asked King Hamad during his March visit to Manama to help him reconnect with the outside world. Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa assessed that Syria would not be able to deliver Hizballah in any peace settlement because the group had become too powerful.

Qatar Sitting on the Fence

¶3. (C) Shaikh Salman stated firmly that Bahrain has concerns about Qatar's unhelpful role in regional affairs. The FM said he believed that the Qataris do not have a strategic plan and that unpredictability at the top makes it exceedingly difficult to deal with the GOQ. Sheikh Khalid advised that the U.S. should emphasize to Qatari PM/FM Hamad bin Jassim the importance of consistency in foreign policy and that Egypt remains a "cornerstone" of U.S. policy in the region. The Crown Prince and Foreign Minister said the Qataris believed, mistakenly, that Bahrain and other GCC governments were urging the U.S. military to pull out of Al Udeid. Still, they added, a marginal reduction in U.S. reliance on military facilities in Qatar would send a helpful message.

¶4. (C) Both the Crown Prince and the FM also spoke of other intra-GCC tensions, including a Saudi-Kuwaiti disagreement over an oil concession in the former Neutral Zone, and reports of Saudi-UAE border crossing issues (reftel). The FM said these disputes, combined with Qatar's self-aggrandizing foreign policy, made the GCC much less effective.

A Turning Point in Iran?

15. (C) "We are at a turning point in the history of modern Iran," said the Crown Prince, noting that the clerical regime was "rattled" by the election results and had "taken off the gloves." He agreed that it seemed unlikely Ahmedinejad had really gotten 63 percent on the first ballot. Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa interjected that it may actually be better that Ahmedinejad emerged "victorious" because the result laid bare the mullahs' desire to maintain power at all cost.

Lebanese Elections - Syria Takes a Back Seat

16. (C) Sheikh Khalid agreed that the Lebanese elections represented a loss for Nabih Beri and the old-guard Shia families. He saw no significant change in "regional" (read Iranian) influence in Lebanon, but noted that Syria had not done well in the elections. For the first time, the FM noted, Syria found itself a secondary player behind Saudi Arabia and Iran.

17. (U) AA/S Feltman has cleared this message.

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